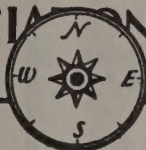


# The COMPASS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS



October 1940

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THE MERIT SYSTEM IN PUBLIC WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

Elizabeth Cosgrove

SOCIAL WORK AND CIVIL SERVICE

Dorothy C. Kahn

EVALUATION OF FIELD WORK PERFORMANCE  
BY A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Leah Feder

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## SOCIAL WORK AND THE DRAFT

In the preliminary plans for the selective service the outline of the provisions for dealing with social problems involved for a registrant is beginning to take shape.

Each of the local draft board areas is to have an examining physician and a governmental appeal agent assigned to it. The following is another of the regulations which have been issued:

"Immediately after its organization, the local board shall consult with local agents of State employment services and public welfare services. The Governor should instruct agencies and services to assist the local board in its classifying of registrants, by making investigations and furnishing information, as requested by the local board."

Members of the Association staff are keeping in touch with the various authorities of the Federal government involved in the registration and draft plans. A preliminary memorandum has been sent to the chapters giving all information available up to the time it was issued and it is likely that other bulletins will be sent out as new regulations are developed and plans for operation of the selective draft are further defined.

## ATTACK ON THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

The Association called for support of the merit principle when the Federal civil service was threatened in late September by an amendment which would have prevented the use of accrediting of colleges and professional schools in connection with eligibility for civil service examinations. The amendment was attached to the Ramspeck Bill when it was in the Senate and made it impossible to "discriminate against any applicant or deny to any applicant the privilege of taking any competitive examination" because such applicant "has not been graduated from a school which has been approved or accredited or assigned a particular rating or classification by any association, organization or group."

Efforts of the Association were directed to securing collaboration from other professions and interested organizations.

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The Ramspeck Bill extended authorization for civil service coverage to about two hundred thousand Federal employes and had already passed the House. After the Senate amendment was added the Bill went to a Conference Committee where, after a few days, the threatening amendment was eliminated.

## A READER'S COMMENT

To the Editor:

"I can't help dropping a note telling you how pleased I am with the forthright affirmation of fundamental social work principles expressed by the Delegate Conference (June-July, 1940, COMPASS). It's very heartening to find a national professional association keeping a level head in the midst of the general hysteria of the day. The Platform on Public Social Services and the resolutions on pages 18 and 19 would be outstanding in any year. In 1940 they represent no small degree of courage and professional honesty."

JACOB FISHER



## *The Merit System in Public Welfare Administration: Standards and Problems*

By Elizabeth Cosgrove, Senior Examiner,  
U. S. Civil Service Commission

IF literature and discussion in the field of public welfare administration and other forms of social work is indicative of interest in a subject, it is seen that the subject of civil service functioning as a merit system has become of vital interest within the last few years. To be sure, some long established public welfare organizations have selected personnel through civil service for many years but such procedure has been more unusual than usual. Current literature and conference programs indicate that something has happened to bring about an increasing interest in the merit system of personnel selection. Obviously this interest has been precipitated by the increased number of social workers in public service, by changed and changing social programs, by large numbers of unemployed seeking placement in public positions, and most recently, by the 1939 amendment to the Social Security Act requiring the selection of personnel in State programs in which Federal funds are used.

The title of this discussion<sup>1</sup> covers the whole range of the subject of merit systems. The discussion itself, however, will not attempt to do more than serve as a response to many requests for an elementary statement of current thought on what a merit system is and where it is going. If some problems can be specified and some understanding brought to them, then this discussion will have been worth while.

It would be interesting and valuable if there were time to relate the historical development of the merit system in public administration. Its use among people of antiquity in Egypt and in China, and its use in one European state for the last two hundred years, and its development in other European countries contemporaneously with its development in the United States appeal to the imagination. A look at history shows that many years of experience are behind the present stage of development; problems that

seem new may merely appear in different terminology. In the United States history shows that Washington and Jefferson and others had what has come to be popularly considered a modern concept of merit selection of personnel. Washington considered family relationship to a public official "an absolute bar to preferment." He denied the claims of old soldiers who had fought valiantly beside him to places on the public payroll unless they were qualified.

Jefferson believed in the training of young men "selected for genius and virtue" for the Government service. The dark chapters of history that tell how the republic has sometimes forgotten the high ideals of public service with which it began may find their parallels in present history unless constant vigilance is exercised. An awareness that some of the difficulties associated with selection of qualified personnel are not new may serve to show that the difficulties lie not with a merit system but with man's tendency to see the present as something different from and not part of the past. This awareness may also cause some hesitation about blocking present developments unless better methods of selection are known to be available.

The chapter in the history of the United States in which large numbers of citizens believe that the lack of employment entitles them to the right of public office has not yet closed. The desire to award positions in return for political support continues to reveal the fact that the "spoils system" is not enjoying a comfortable sleep. However, the extension of the merit system on Federal, State and local levels is indication that the public, including forward-looking statesmen, wishes to profit by mistakes of the past and to see that qualified selected personnel administer the public social services. At the same time, these forward-looking citizens are seeking other ways in which the unemployed job seeker can be cared for without sacrifice of the public good.

What, then, is the concept of what is

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the National Conference of Social Work, Public Welfare Section, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 28, 1940.



known as the merit system today? It is an integrated system for selecting and retaining qualified personnel for public positions. It uses selection techniques developed in specialized fields. The merit system aims to establish its service on the mutual confidence of personnel agency and operating agency in each other's skill and integrity.

The merit system is the functioning of processes which have been described and formally regulated by statutes or by rules *in advance of their operation*. Regulations in most jurisdictions cover provisions for the following: classification of positions, compensation plans, recruitment, examination, certification, probationary appointments, in-service training, service rating, promotional plans, separations, retirement, appeals, maintenance of service records, and research. One part of the system or a few parts of the system cannot function except in relation to all other parts. Examinations held for positions which have been inaccurately classified may be rendered invalid. Lack of a formal plan of certification can cancel the values established in any other part of a merit system and so subject the entire system to mistrust or failure. Because some of the processes constitute an area which is better known to most people, they have occasionally come to represent the whole of a system. For example, holding examinations does not constitute the operation of a merit system.

Any one of the processes just enumerated presents sufficient basis for discussion to constitute an entire conference program. Therefore, only a few of the problems associated with some of the processes in selecting personnel for public welfare administration will be introduced. But nothing more important can be said than that the merit system, to function effectively, must be the functioning of all of its parts, that its operation must be continuously appraised and that it must be based on a foundation of mutual respect and trust on the part of the personnel agency and the operating agencies.

In order to select personnel for public welfare positions it is necessary to know the exact nature of those positions and what qualifications are necessary to perform the duties. By this time there are probably few jurisdictions in which social workers are not struggling with the problem of describing various grades and kinds of social work positions. It is fundamental to sound procedure to recognize the variety of standards necessary to meet some State and local conditions. However, there is always the danger that standards may become so wide in their variation that the standards of sound social work practice on a

nation-wide basis will become seriously jeopardized. The merit system agencies, of necessity, look to social workers as a professional group to describe their work and qualifications. If, within one jurisdiction, there is diversity of opinion as to what constitutes reasonable and acceptable standards of social work, the responsibility lies within the social work group to resolve those difficulties, if that group wishes to assume it. It seems ill advised to force such a responsibility upon the merit system agency.

From the standpoint of selective recruitment a number of difficulties loom in importance—salary levels, age, residence, marital status, pressures of special privilege groups, and others. There is no question about the reality of some of these difficulties but difficulties tend to magnify rather than simplify themselves. The matter of low salary levels for some public welfare positions in beginning programs is one that may not be as hard to handle as it seems. Security in employment, opportunity for advancement, participation in a vital program directed towards the alleviation of human suffering are positive factors that cannot be ignored in recruitment. In some fields of social work salary levels are still low and it cannot be expected that the public as an employer will offer salaries higher than those prevalent in a given field or beyond those established for similar services. Education of the public through higher grade performance on the part of qualified social workers is certainly the quickest way to have the salary scale placed on a par with that offered for other similar services. Except where the number of social workers in a given locality is definitely known to be too small to cover needs, an aggressive and continuous program of recruitment carried on through lectures, conferences, writings, press and radio, in conjunction with a valid examining program tends to increase the number of qualified applicants and to place the best qualified eligibles at the tops of registers. This kind of positive recruitment does not depend on merely advertising an examination but aims at securing the continuing interest of qualified persons both in taking examinations and in accepting appointments. Whenever as much directed energy is put into helping to perfect the techniques of selective processes as is spent on lamenting their shortcomings, the shortcomings tend to disappear.

In examining for social work positions the help of the operating agencies and others interested in protecting individuals in need of assistance from malpractice and in seeing that individuals in need of assistance receive the



services of the best available personnel becomes of paramount importance. The absence of licensing for individuals who may do social work requires civil service commissions to look to professional groups to define the fields in which examinations are to be held and to define what factors are to be tested for. It is in this area that the cooperative aspects of an examining program have an opportunity to function. Personnel technicians and social workers are recognizing their dependence upon one another but this recognition needs to be more widespread in order to make for more effective programs. Social workers need to accept the fact that there are special skills in examining, that those who have directed their training and experience towards knowing how to examine have a body of specialized knowledge and skills which one does not have by merely having been subjected to taking examinations.

The sources of the difficulties usually seen between the two groups seem to be (a) the difficulty in developing test procedures that will select social workers who have demonstrated skill in handling human relationships, which skill is the sine qua non of social work practice and (b) the reluctance of social workers to accept established test procedures as adequate tools for selection.

Recognition by social workers of the specialization and difficulties involved in the examining process produces a basis for real cooperation when examiners recognize the skills and goals of the social workers.

Recognition by merit system agencies that social workers are ready to give real assistance when called upon to do so will get their examining programs on their way. The specific manner in which such assistance can be given varies according to the resources and resourcefulness of any community. In general, however, the operating social work agencies can give and enlist assistance in some of the following ways: (1) rendering consultation service on standards of education and experience through keeping the merit system agencies informed on developments, standards, and trends, (2) participating in rating education and experience, (3) outlining fields of competence and knowledge in which examinations are to be held, (4) participating on oral examining boards in carefully controlled experiments as well as in actual oral examinations, (5) assisting in determining qualifications, by way of education and experience and other factors, for various grades of positions, (6) constantly defining the factors to be tested for. This last step brings social workers closer to the reality of the difficulties of examining for social work positions. Another

means of effecting proximity is constructing test items for possible use of the merit system agency. These items cannot usually be used without editing and without adapting them to the total examination but if they are carefully reviewed by test experts they are sometimes useful.

Writing references on prospective social work employees constitutes another indirect service to a merit system program. This subject has warranted extended consideration among social workers and is mentioned here as a reminder that civil service commissions count on integrity and articulateness on the part of those who write references.

This is not the time or place to discuss what types of examinations should be given for social work positions. Each merit system agency is struggling with its own distinctive problems, as well as with the absence of standardized tests for some grades of positions. If personnel agencies can find responsible assistance from social work groups they will increasingly call on those groups for cooperation.

The best possible classification and examination program must be protected by a formal plan of certification. Although there are differences in both theory and practice in regard to certification plans, long experience on the part of some of the oldest commissions has led to the practice of establishing registers of eligibles in the order of their numerical rating of achievement on examination and certifying the first three names to the appointing officer in the operating agency. The important problem to be reckoned with in certification is the pressure brought to bear to deviate from procedures established in advance on the basis of fair principles. If practice indicates that established certification procedures are actually preventing the operating agencies from securing qualified personnel, a review of the procedures in relation to all other selective processes is necessary. Deviation from established procedure is not warranted inasmuch as deviations may cause the collapse of the whole system. Planned review of procedures, however, is necessary and makes for the difference between a vital merit system and one that is atrophic. Since the primary objective of the merit system is to secure qualified personnel for the operating agencies, continuous review and research are necessary.

And now comes the crux of the situation. The point at which a merit system may stand or fall is the use of the probationary period. The period must be of sufficient duration to

*(Continued on page 14)*



## Social Work and Civil Service

By Dorothy C. Kahn

THERE could be no more critical moment in the long struggle to secure qualified personnel in public welfare than this present. I say this not to complicate the subject of our discussion today \* but to point out that this is the year when patterns are being cut for the application of civil service to public social work positions which will determine the character of these positions for some years to come.

It has already been pointed out that these patterns had been in the making for some years before the final passage of what has come to be known as the personnel amendment to the Social Security Act. Certainly this is true, but these trial patterns, if I may call them that, have been, with of course an increasing number of exceptions, largely experimental. How useful will they be in a field which now claims some 75,000 to 100,000 social work positions, the greater number of these in the public service, 29,000 approximately in public assistance alone?

Moreover the rapid expansion of these services, the lack of available qualified personnel, their conspicuousness in the public mind because of their extent and because of the political battles that have been waged over them, along with widespread unemployment and uncertainty about vocational choices—this is a set of circumstances presenting a rare combination of assets and liabilities. By no means all of the liabilities have been political. There are certain restraints upon the politicians which develop inevitably in circumstances such as those that I have so sketchily outlined. One of the most common of these restraints is the spreading conviction that the best politics, under certain conditions, is "no politics." The validation of this conviction appears in the Hatch Act and its state and local counterparts, and in the personnel amendment itself. But these controls are not adequate in themselves to secure a sound system. The liability of public scepticism about the nature of the jobs to be done may seem to many persons a serious brake on effort. This scepticism, combined with the lack of readily available personnel, hobbles efforts to eliminate residence requirements and to write into state and local plans clear

statements about the nature of the job and necessary qualifications for it. In spite of this, it has been possible to allocate substantial numbers of these positions to the Professional and Scientific Service under the United States Civil Service, or to similar State classifications. The greatest single step of progress this year has been the appointment of a social worker as Senior Examiner in the United States Civil Service Commission, with special responsibilities in this field.

A far greater liability, I believe, than either politics or public scepticism, has been the timidity of certain social work groups. No useful purpose would be served by failure to note this fact. On the contrary, I must confess that my sole reason for undertaking this assignment was to say just this, and to call for an increasingly vigorous kind of activity on the part of social workers everywhere as a suitable counterpart to our emerging sureness about public social work functions. What I have just said may surprise this audience, like the minister's sermon on non-attendance at church. The people to whom I am speaking are probably not here today. But if you who are here agree with my analysis of this situation, you will tell them. I refer to the fact that social workers generally have hesitated, for a variety of reasons, to claim as their own the many new positions in public social work. Some feared that to make such a claim would alienate public officials, legislators, politicians, and the general public—this in spite of the fact that some of the loudest calls for help have come from these very groups. Others feared that to make a pronouncement in the face of a persistent dearth of "qualified personnel" would seem unrealistic at least, if not visionary. Still others—and to these I admit an unforgiving spirit—have been so remote from the developments in the public services or so contemptuous of the tasks to be performed, or of the persons who were, of necessity, recruited to perform them in the public field, that they have rationalized their own attitudes by believing, and sometimes saying, that the job component itself in certain public positions, especially those on the operating level, was largely sub-professional or not professional at all.

This, we must confess, has been true and still is (hopefully to a decreasing degree), in

\* This paper was delivered at a meeting of the Public Welfare Section, National Conference of Social Work, Grand Rapids, 1940.



spite of the leadership afforded by the American Association of Social Workers in promoting the interest and active participation of social workers in the establishment and improvement of civil service, and in spite of the years of painstaking work on the part of many individual social workers. Let nothing I am saying here permit us to lose sight of these activities. They were largely responsible for the personnel amendment, and the valuable activity of social workers in the Social Security Board which preceded this change in law. They were responsible for creating and safeguarding merit systems in many states and localities. They were also responsible for the first comprehensive document in this field—Alice Campbell Klein's *Civil Service in Public Welfare*, prepared and published by the Russell Sage Foundation at the suggestion of the New York City Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers. One needs only to examine this document or the files of the Association and its 84 chapters, or indeed the files of personnel agencies, to see the evidences of effort, both well directed and rewarding. The fact remains, however, that there lurks still in the minds of many otherwise thoughtful social workers a notion that civil service is a kind of necessary evil, regrettably inflexible and unyielding to the developing subtleties of professional knowledge and skill, a device, at its best, selecting a dead level of mediocrity, and at its worst offering tenure and security to the less competent. This notion is not peculiar to the social worker, and not without some justification in certain places where civil service is not well developed. My thesis is that the traces of this attitude among social workers and the public alike will yield only to the piling up of evidence that civil service and social work are companion safeguards of the public interest, indispensable and interdependent.

The first problem that confronts us in this field is that of recognizing and identifying social work positions. I can find no attempt anywhere to define what these are, although there are literally hundreds which have been identified, labelled and subjected to the most detailed scrutiny. It must appear to many that social work positions are selected more by acclamation than description. This is to be noted especially when precisely the same job, by description, will carry professional requirements in one jurisdiction and sub-professional, or no requirements, in another. As a matter of strategy we may be wise in seeking to capture for qualified social workers first those positions which have been admitted as social work positions. This was under-

taken in a pronouncement at the Delegate Conference of the American Association of Social Workers three days ago, which will be discussed shortly. But because I have an adventurous spirit and because I think I go farther in my belief in the need for professional social work service than many of my colleagues, I am going to attempt a definition and submit it for your criticism and improvement:

A social work position is one in which a substantial part of the worker's activity consists of direct contact with individuals or groups in situations which call for an understanding of human behavior and the exercise of judgment in extending or withholding a social service or benefit.

I hold no brief for this definition. It may be too inclusive. It may lack specificity. It may be that in the use of the words "social service" we evade the difficulties of definition. We may still need to define a social service. I submit this only as an indication of the fact that there is a problem here, on which we are making progress more by virtue of public acceptance of the more obvious social work positions than by a deliberate pushing forward of the frontiers of social work. The current study of the American Association of Schools of Social Work on "Training Needs in the Public Social Services" is one example of pioneering effort. The current activity of the American Association of Social Workers in attempting further to define the need for social work skills in the administration of social insurance is another.

Our next problem, having identified a social work position, is to influence the application of a professional standard to this position. Here social work encounters a problem not met in other professions. Except for the single state where voluntary certification has been undertaken, there is no short cut to this task. And even in California, I believe it would be impossible to attempt to limit social work positions to Registered Social Workers. In the absence of other criteria, the membership standard of the American Association of Social Workers has carried the banner—and the burden—of certification. There is no effective way in which to measure the impact of the membership standard on public social work. Suffice it to say that it alone has made possible a definition of requirements that is repeated in one specification after another in this field. Obviously, this definition does not appear often in the form of requiring membership in the AASW although such a requirement has been used in some instances, however inappropriate it



may be to use professional organization membership as such in lieu of the specific qualifications which such membership is supposed to carry. It does appear frequently, however, in terms that bear a notable resemblance to the membership standard. Certainly the most ambitious professional organization would not presume to seek the use of membership itself in this way, but in the absence of certification or license some criteria or standards must be available. Such a standard is at last available in the statement adopted at the Delegate Conference of the AASW. It reads

WHEREAS, the American Association of Social Workers has already gone on record as believing that the quality of social work personnel is the primary determinant of quality of social work service; and

WHEREAS, there is need of a guide by which to measure this quality, eliminating the present necessity for using the Association's membership standard to identify those with the basic equipment necessary for social work practice; and

WHEREAS, there is reason to establish the basic professional standard so that during this period when facilities are not adequate for achieving the standard itself, any adjustments necessary are made in relation to the known standard, particularly as there is a crystallization of personnel standards now taking place throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, the most reliable existing means of identifying persons with the basic equipment necessary for competent performance of social work practice is the specialized training they have received;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the following are standards to be used in the selection of personnel for social work positions:

*First*, that persons in social work positions are confronted in their work with responsibilities relating to the lives and affairs of others in such a way as to require important safeguards in the public interest. These safeguards may best be insured by the selection for social work positions of persons whose preparation includes successful completion of two years of professional study in a graduate school of social work;

*Second*, that where it is necessary to deviate from the above standard because under present conditions this goal cannot be realized immediately, the following principles should be applied:

- a. That where persons with two years of professional study are not available, selection of personnel should be made first from the group of persons who have successfully completed the first year of graduate study in a school of social work.
- b. Under no conditions should workers be employed who, at the time of employment, are ineligible to obtain graduate professional training. Any workers employed should indicate interest in as well as capacity for the use of opportunities for professional growth. At the time of employment some plan should be worked out for obtaining the minimum professional education within a five-year period from the date of employment.
- c. Social work experience under the supervision of a qualified social worker should be given priority over other kinds of experience in consideration of

individuals who do not meet the minimum qualification. Such experience should not, however, be considered a substitute either for professional education or eligibility for such.

- d. Until such time as there are sufficient numbers of adequately trained personnel available for all social work positions, means should be established in terms of job classifications, salaries and opportunities for promotion whereby personnel meeting the qualifications of professional training can be distinguished from employees without such qualifications. Such differentiation should be provided in those situations where trained and untrained workers have been employed to perform similar duties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

*First*, that requirements of state and local residence, veterans preference and other extra-professional considerations are inimical to selection of personnel on the basis of professional competence.

*Second*, that such a standard should be considered an evolving, developing one which is never fixed but represents, at a given point, the desirable goal for which to strive. Therefore it is important that any standard adopted be subject to continuous review.

*Third*, that the qualifications of an agency's social work personnel in line with these standards be a consideration in defining a social agency of acceptable standards.

This statement presents for the first time to both operating and personnel agencies a realistic standard supported by the profession as a whole. It should have a notable effect upon the whole civil service process, by virtue of affording to those agencies that either desire or can be persuaded to use it, a simple straightforward plan that may serve to guide programs of staff building for a fair number of years ahead.

What this statement does not do and what no statement can do is to assist operating and personnel agencies in recruiting suitable candidates for these social work positions. Nor can it determine with accuracy, in advance of employment, the possession of skill and knowledge warranting expectation of success in public service.

This brings us to a third problem—that of incorporating into merit systems and test procedures the knowledge that a profession has acquired in years of less formalized selection. The tendency to question the accuracy with which more formal methods may be used in the selection of professional personnel is based partly on a resistance to precise analysis in a field which does not pretend to be an exact science, and partly on a naive lack of information about the state of development of the personnel field. It is not so many years ago that a famous psychologist through a series of the best developed tests of his day demon-

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## *Evaluation of Field Work Performance by a Professional School*

By **Leah Feder**, Associate Professor, George Warren Brown Department of Social Work, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

CASE work practice forms the base upon which professional schools of social work determine the content of field work.<sup>1</sup> As a part of case work practice the evaluation process likewise indicates certain fundamental principles and methods upon which evaluation of field work performance may be framed. Field work evaluation is an important step in learning for a student in case work. Not only does he see himself in relation to the expected performance of a staff member, but he learns also to use his evaluation experience as a component in his development of competency to carry on an acceptable case work job.

According to a committee of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers which recently reported upon some of the principles in the evaluation process of a case worker's position, "The use of evaluations presupposes that the agency has defined its own usefulness to the community and has carefully considered what it needs from its worker in original equipment and in quality and direction of development on the job."<sup>2</sup> In other words, a careful job analysis leads inevitably to a consideration of the standard of performance required in particular positions and the agency uses the evaluation process as a way by which the staff improves the service of the agency. The emphasis is primarily upon a better performance of the job in the achievement of which the growth of the worker is necessarily a significant factor. The individual knows where he stands in the expectation of performance the agency sets up.

Both case work agencies and schools of social work accept the fact that the exercise of authority is a recognized part of the process of evaluation. The supervisor, as Roberta Townsend points out "must accept the authority inherent in his position and the staff must accept his right to have it, just as each mem-

ber accepts his own function and the different contributions he makes as a result."<sup>3</sup> Both participants in the evaluation understand beforehand the aspects of the work to be evaluated so that the worker or student may be active in utilizing the opportunity to scrutinize his own work, but in the last analysis the supervisor must retain the responsibility for making a judgment. The student or worker, however, may thus participate more actively in this process. For the staff member future promotions, salary increases, and job possibilities are involved, for the student the same potentialities exist plus the added importance, in many instances, of entering a profession.

Authority is a factor in all case work organization. Not only must the student learn to work comfortably with it in relation to his supervisor and the administrative requirements of the agency, but he will frequently find himself in a position of authority with clients and other workers. The significance of the supervisor's authoritative role in evaluation of field work is greater than appears on the surface; it is the epitome of a relationship running through personnel and case work relationships. The student's use of a specific situation involving authority such as evaluation, therefore, may carry great weight, as the following material illustrates.

Passive acceptance of even the most trying situations began to disappear as one particular student was able to express his resentment over authoritatively imposed regulations. He protested vehemently when a worker in another agency successfully wooed his client away from him; he complained over having to take responsibility for intake decisions he felt had been too difficult for him; he resisted a minor regulation of field work administration. The week before his formal evaluation, he used his supervisory conference to bring out some of his resentment against the way the supervisor had handled certain situations, at the same time articulating his fears that his expression of resentment might result in

<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered at a meeting of the Social Case Work Section, National Conference of Social Work, Grand Rapids, 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Some Principles in the Evaluation Process, *THE COMPASS*, March, 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Townsend, Roberta; Evaluation: An Important Aspect of the Administrative Process. *THE COMPASS*, June, 1937.



retaliation on the part of the authoritative person, the supervisor. The supervisor referred to his increased self-confidence and the fact that it must have made him more comfortable to be able to bring out the negative. She mentioned the greater fear of retaliation at this particular time because they both understood she would be evaluating and grading him. The student burst forth with "Isn't that true." He has learned, however, that he can disagree and still hold on to ideas.

The supervisor felt the student's fears about retaliation had been handled to a large extent upon the projected level of a recent case involving the relation between giving relief and the client's expectation of swift retaliation for expression of hostility or practice of deception. She therefore drew an analogy between the student's fears and the case stressing the objective factors that enter into granting relief and using the man's hostility not as a direct cause for denying relief but as a way of understanding his handling of all his affairs on the basis of which the decision about relief would be made. The student conference shows, partly implicitly and partly explicitly that the student was at last daring to be himself, somewhat tentatively to be sure, but nevertheless realistically. The supervisor's acceptance of her authoritative role and of his feeling about it had dissipated, to a certain extent, his fears in expressing resentment to a person with such authority.

Evaluation as a part of supervision is not limited to the evaluation interview. The latter, as a matter of fact, is merely a recapitulation of what has been brought out in greater detail in all the supervisory conferences, in the supervisor's reading of records and in the observation of the student or worker in groups and in contact with staff members. The evaluation interview is of the same quality and content, except that it is broader in scope and in point of time is related to certain significant administrative changes in status such as salary increases or for the student the end of a semester. An evaluation disassociated from administrative demands may be more realistically a part of development in case work growth. For example an evaluation in the middle of a field work assignment may point the way to an analytical approach as basic to next steps in the student's progress and give opportunity for using the evaluation material as a guide to the direction of effort for the remainder of the period.

Evaluation of field work, however, has certain qualities which distinguish it from the evaluation of a staff member's performance.

With due respect to the necessity of protecting the work the agency is carrying on, the focus of field work, and therefore of evaluation of field work, is directed primarily to the growth of the student. At the same time it presupposes an intimate knowledge of the standards for performance which the case work agency has already established.

Field work evaluation implies also something broader than can be learned within a particular setting alone. A student who accepts the necessity for finding a new house for a family merely as a practical problem, and does not relate it to the total housing situation of the community centered in rent levels, availability of houses and repair of houses, is overlooking possibilities for widening his knowledge. Student supervisors evaluate the use the student makes of his opportunities for enlarging his understanding, in contrast to the demands upon staff members for finishing particular pieces of work rather than exploring all the broad possibilities of a problem as a means of enriching their background of knowledge. Staff members relate their exploration more directly to accomplishment of the job.

Specific criteria for evaluation of field work in case work follow the expected performance for staff members of case work agencies at least in so far as the areas covered. In general evaluation outlines include the following points: <sup>4</sup>

#### A. In case work

1. Observation and interviewing
2. The social study including
  - (a) The ability to read case records
  - (b) The ability to obtain pertinent information from collateral sources
3. Analysis of findings
4. Planning treatment
5. Treatment
  - (a) Establishment and use of the professional relationship
  - (b) Understanding and use of environmental sources
  - (c) Handling of relief and the student's relation to it
  - (d) Steps in carrying out plans
6. Relation to other social agencies and the life of the neighborhood
7. Recording and letter writing

<sup>4</sup>These particular points were taken from the field work report outlines of the New York School of Social Work and of Washington University.



## B. Organization of work

1. Management of day-by-day job—promptness, balance in distributing effort, dependability and handling details<sup>5</sup>
2. Use of supervisory and group conferences
3. Participation in the administration aspects of the job

As background for the evaluation a brief description of assignments in case work, staff, group and community activities is given in order to determine more exactly the student's use of experience and his progress. Provision is made also for discussion of the student's ability to integrate theory and practice, for consideration of his personal capacities as they relate to the demands of the case work job, and for the supervisor's recommendations as to next steps in planning the student's development.

The bare outline gives no indication of students for field work accomplishment either as to scope or quality at various stages of field work instruction. Students may vary in their way of learning, in their capacity for growth, and in the speed with which they develop. As one student after another, however, comes to a certain point of understanding and skill in field work performance at the end of a given period, student supervisors and the school tend to think of that development as the norm. The New York School of Social Work, for example, in its explanation to supervisors of the written field work report brings out the need for a period of orientation when entering a field work assignment, followed by "concentration on social work techniques and by conscious use of theory which results in some integration of the student's total program." In the second quarter of field work, emphasis is placed on the student's ability to think diagnostically about his cases and in the third quarter he is expected to show an increasing ability to evaluate case material, to plan treatment in the light of evaluation, and to show growth qualitatively. Mention is made also of the student's awareness of himself in case work, assumption of definite responsibility for his training needs and evaluation of his own performance. These criteria are important inasmuch as they indicate the order in which the student may be expected to develop specific case work skills.

In the actual evaluation of field work, however, the situation demands a balance between

standards for performance of students and consideration of the individual student's rate of advancement, taking into consideration the point at which he started. On the one hand such a process is much more complicated than evaluation of staff members whose primary consideration is given to the job to be done; on the other, evaluation of field work is set off also from class work where measurement of ability rests upon capacity for intellectual achievement centering for all members of the class upon mastery of the same material. In addition to standards of performance the supervisor has to take into account individual growth during a stated period, whether or not the student meets the expected standards or exceeds them. From this angle, a student who has never had any experience with household management, handling of money, or face to face contact with small children may not be able to reach the norm in the first periods of field work, although his development along these lines may be quite unusual. A student with broader personal experience may actually show greater achievement, but no growth.

If we assume that growth of the student in performance of case work is our major concern, then as supervisors we are inevitably thrust into a position of evaluating the student's personal qualifications. What safeguards the procedure, however, is that both the supervisor and the student recognize that the judgment expressed in evaluation is not leveled at the student personally nor is it an end in itself but it is directed always to the analysis of his competency to work with other people as clients or colleagues and the ways by which he may attain such competency. For many students any form of evaluation up to this time has meant only praise or personal failure or rejection by a superior. In field work, as one student recently expressed it, his whole energy was no longer directed toward keeping others from discovering his weaknesses. His supervisor was able to accept him even with his failures. The gain for him was that the focus of evaluation had been shifted from him as a person to his case work where evidences of his personal qualifications were observed and worked with as they affected his performance.

In careful scrutiny of the content of field work and the student we must not omit an evaluation of the supervisor's own role in the process. I can think of no better way of expressing this than to quote from a field work evaluation which just reached my desk:

*(Continued on page 17)*

<sup>5</sup> Specific points stressed are from "Some Principles in the Evaluation Process." THE COMPASS, March, 1940.



### Teaching Professional Ethics

That social work is reaching maturity is indicated in some degree by the growing interest in the ethics of the profession. Actually, despite this new interest, there has been little contribution to our basic understanding of those professional responsibilities which are or may be peculiar to social work. The schools of social work have given almost no specific attention to this subject although it is implicit in their case work and field work courses.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, professional ethics cannot be studied apart from the actual practice of social work if such study is to have a realistic rather than a theoretical content. Special courses dealing with social work ethics can, however, have a practical content even when taught separately, and this added emphasis seems justified by observation of practices in the field, the seeming confusion of many social workers in this area of thought, the eagerness of students and workers to discuss practices involving ethical considerations, and the fact that schools training for the older professions of law and medicine have found special attention to ethics desirable.

First efforts to develop basic concepts of professional ethics for social workers which might be incorporated into something resembling a code have been slow and faltering. Several so-called codes of ethics have been formulated, but those examined, while encouraging since they give evidence of thought regarding a subject which needs wide consideration, do not show definitive analysis. Rather, these codes are a combination of ideas borrowed from the older professions and guides for personal conduct formulated during a period when those engaged in public social work were subjected to much public attention and criticism. This is quite a natural development since we must take the first step before we can take the second and also because our nebulous public standing has made it difficult for social workers themselves to see clearly the difference between those standards of personal conduct which are applicable to all persons as against those special responsibilities which we bear for professional competence. We have been further confused in attempting to establish sound professional principles by trying to encompass guides which are infallible in all situations. Before much progress can be made we must

recognize that there are many decisions which must be left to the professionally trained and competent social worker which no code can govern. There can be no code of professional conduct which will eliminate the need for discriminating decisions which can only be made in the light of the circumstances by one professionally competent in the field. Nor do we wish to straight-jacket our professional conduct in such a way as we sometimes feel has been done in other professions, so that the broader welfare is sacrificed.

During the past year the University of Washington Graduate School of Social Work conducted an experimental seminar in professional ethics to which was admitted a limited number of students, all but one or two of whom had actually had experience in social work. The course was started with a series of discussions led by a doctor, lawyer, minister, educator, nurse, journalist, and politician, each of whom discussed the problems of ethics as pertaining to his respective field.<sup>2</sup> Following these discussions the seminar attempted to define those areas in which a social worker has professional relationships and corresponding responsibilities. Each member of the seminar was responsible for illustrative problems around which discussion was developed. Professional literature was searched to find problems which illustrated ethical questions confronting practitioners and articles which presented the thinking of the profession regarding the ethical concepts involved.

A number of articles in the *Compass* were of considerable use both in indicating the problems and in helping the seminar arrive at a decision as to what the professional principle under the circumstances might be. For example, one of the most thought provoking discussions lasting over three class periods (of two hours each) centered around the article on "California Story—Unfinished" by George Nickel, in the January, 1940, issue of the *Compass*. After full discussion one member was delegated to write a reply to the article in question pointing out that the issue involved in the California situation did not really involve professional ethics and that the failure to perceive this indicated a need for further clarification of ethical concepts. Articles such as these are invaluable as teaching material for they have so practical a basis that they stimulate the student in making a realistic analysis of the issues involved.

<sup>1</sup> Miss Nan Gerry, of the University of Nebraska Graduate School of Social Work, has had a course in Professional Ethics for social workers since 1937 and the University of Washington introduced a seminar in this subject in 1939.

<sup>2</sup> The seminar concluded that the last three fields represented had not developed enough professionally to make any worthwhile contribution in helping to clarify thinking in the field of social work on this subject.



Finally, each member of the seminar drafted a code of ethics which he felt he could defend. Subsequently, a series of meetings was held, continuing long after the quarter had closed, in which the group drafted a code to which all members could subscribe.<sup>3</sup> Like other codes this is a tentative one which has not been sufficiently refined. Students in the seminar, however, seem to have a much more real appreciation of some of the ethical concepts which should govern the conduct of social workers and a new understanding of the importance of their relationships with the other professions. It has strengthened and sharpened their appreciation of the professional aspects of the field of social work which

it seems doubtful could be achieved by giving secondary consideration to this subject in some other course. It is hoped that the next experimental seminar in the subject will be able to advance considerably beyond the first and that a more discriminating code may be developed which will more nearly indicate those responsibilities which are peculiar to the social work profession. The development of a code, of course, is only incidental. The real value from such a course comes to the student by reason of the analysis, the weighing and judgment he must give to the questions considered. It increases the student's awareness of the professional obligation and hence gives him a sense of his own greater responsibility for competence, which is our only hope of raising standards of performance.

ERNEST F. WITTE  
University of Washington

<sup>3</sup> See "A Proposed Code of Ethics for Social Workers", *The Chronicle*, Vol. I, No. 2, May, 1940. (Student publication of the Graduate School of Social Work, The University of Washington.)

## To the Editor:

Mrs. Fenlason's stimulating article, "The Problem of Credit for Field Work in Case Work Practice," published in the August issue of *THE COMPASS* will strike responsive chords in every instructor of field work. We struggle constantly with the problem of *measuring* a content that is still largely *undefined*, certainly an impossible situation to be in.

Important as that aspect of the educator's problem is, I would like to make a few brief remarks on another subject Mrs. Fenlason discusses. The third aspect of supervised field work mentioned in the article is the development of personality. Mrs. Fenlason states, "We do not believe however that they (personality traits) can be fairly considered as part of a student's grade in field work. . . . More objective measures of his achievement than the presence or absence of the traits themselves must be the basis of an academic grade." These statements express to me the only possible way in which we can look upon this aspect of the student's or worker's equipment. Personally, I would go so far as to say that the development of personality cannot in itself be considered an educational objective of the field work experience. Whatever changes take place during the experience are in the service only of social case work practice; focussed on specific ideas, opinions and attitudes which need either modification or discipline in order to be of

assistance to clients; superficial for the most part, not in the sense of being insincere, but in the sense of not eradicating basic problems in the student's personality.

Granted however that certain traits, ways of thinking, etc. are essential to good practice, it would be most helpful to consider how, professionally, they can be observed and measured. As Mrs. Fenlason says, we need objective measures of achievement and I would like to make the suggestion that any recognition we give to the presence, absence, or development of personal traits must be in terms of performance. In other words I would be inclined to say that the development of personality is, for professional education, not *suitable* for grading, however much we might believe it to be *subject* to grading. For example, should we say "Miss X is sympathetic"; or "Miss X responds to the client as he sees his situation?" Should we say "Mr. Z resents authority"; or "Mr. Z discards the supervisor's suggestions without examining them?"

Perhaps we might discuss further this question, is the development of personality appropriate for evaluation, before grappling with the second, is it measurable? Among psychologists, who are the professional experts in this matter, there are differences of opinion. Are paper tests of personality valid? Do they correlate more closely with intelligence than with emotional life? How valid and reliable are personality rating scales?

Jeanette Regensburg, School of Social Work, Tulane University



## Merit System in Public Welfare

(Continued from page 5)

demonstrate the capacity of the incumbents. Supervisors of probationers must have sufficient skill to recognize talent when they see it and to be both kindly and courageous in recommending for dismissal those workers who are incompetent and show no growth potentialities. The supervision given in the probationary period is actually an extension of the examining process. It is during this period also that the value and importance of in-service training and service rating programs are seen. Although there is nothing in most merit systems' rules that makes it impossible to separate incompetents after they have been employed for a period of years, some agencies find it distasteful and tend to let matters stand unless they are intolerable. (This, incidentally, is not confined to personnel practice in the *public* field or to the merit system.) The probationary period, then, offers the opportunity of stimulating and so retaining the well qualified workers and of dismissing those who will eventually hamper the program. It is of so much importance that operating agencies are finding it profitable to assign their probationers to their most skillful supervisors. In some jurisdictions special service rating forms have been developed for use during the probationary period so that supervisors may gauge performance more accurately during that period. Since history is being made today in the recent expansion of merit systems and since programs are now being built in many jurisdictions, the importance of the probation period cannot be exaggerated.

At any step within the functioning of a merit system an appeals procedure is necessary to avoid the danger of working a hardship on any individual and to serve as part of a sound system of checks and balances. The kind of appeals system is not so important as that it operates under auspices of those who are skilled in the technicalities of personnel work, that appeals procedures are established before they are put into operation, that they function in relation to each process in the merit system, and that they function uniformly. Appeals procedures are established to be used; commissions are aware that they can and do make mistakes and are willing to rectify them. Supervisors make mistakes and the incumbent who may be penalized by the arbitrary decision on a service rating by a supervisor has a right to have his story heard and acted upon. Because appeals procedures are established for use there need be no reluctance to use them and there

seems to be no need for belligerency in the approach of those appealing.

These, then, are a few of the problems associated with specific processes within a merit system. Observations on some other problems related to these are enumerated here not by way of either apology or criticism but merely for the purpose of asking your consideration of them. Some of them find expression in the operating agencies, some among qualified persons who have not yet become identified with public welfare organizations functioning within a merit system, and some find expression within the merit system agencies.

A few of these problems seem to find their origin in fear. There is the fear that it is impossible to operate a merit system without political domination or at least interference, and that positions so held are insecure. There is the fear that the merit system tends to crystallize low standards of performance, that it tends to "freeze in" an incumbent at a low salary or professional level. If one were to recognize complete justification for these fears, one must also say that the converse of the situation is true under either a patronage system or a free selection of personnel in private or public agencies. Political domination finds its counterparts in the domination of vested interests in many areas; low standards of work and lack of progression are found wherever individuals responsible for them allow them to prevail.

There are also the fear of the unknown and the fear of failure in connection with examinations. A potential qualified applicant sometimes is reluctant to take examinations because he lacks faith in the process and he is not quite certain of what troubles or opportunities are ahead. It is only the secure individual who fearlessly takes a chance on failure. No one can deny that to some extent hastily prepared and invalid examining programs justify these fears. However, time, skill and cooperation as removers of the causes of fear are more effective tools than withdrawal or resistance to merit systems of selection.

The slowness with which lists of qualified eligibles are made available to operating agencies is a problem that only the public can reckon with. The rapid extension of civil service places upon already under-staffed merit system agencies an additional burden of work without making provision for additional personnel. The volume of work fluctuates; there is no control over intake and the merit system agency must produce with everybody counting its tempo and groaning at its mistakes. No matter how extensively



some parts of their work may be expedited through mechanical devices there always remains the need for high grade personnel in sufficient number to handle the volume and variety of work in the merit system agency itself. Such an agency, inadequately staffed, may become merely a production agency unless it has public support. Its limitations and defects are as well known as those of the proverbial people who live in glass houses. The problem involved in handling this fluctuation in volume of work can be met only after the merit system agency and the public welfare agencies are well established and, through a cooperative program, their needs can be anticipated.

The public, including the operating agencies, expect a quality of performance which approximates perfection. The operating agencies like to have certified to them within a short period of time a large list of eligibles so well qualified that they have won blue ribbons in the race and are eager to accept an appointment.

The limitations of the merit system agency also constitute a convenient shield behind which incompetent administrators or legislators may seek refuge. More is expected of a civil service commission than any agency might reasonably be expected to deliver. Frequently the critics do not have such important facts as the terms of the statute, or the rules under which the commission must operate. A social worker's training in securing facts before speaking or acting and his interest in constructive criticism might be insurance against unwarranted criticism.

Operating agencies sometimes chafe under regulations and devote considerable skill and energy to "getting around" regulations. Extensive pressures are brought to bear by some groups which conceive a merit system's reason for existence is to secure positions for large numbers of people whose only qualification is being out of work.

There is a substantial group of able administrators who believe that the real goal of a merit system can be achieved without the existence of a formal system. In 1935, Dr. Ellen Potter, Chairman of this section of the National Conference of Social Work, gave a description of what was accomplished in one State without a merit system. She showed that "it is possible to build up quickly an efficient body of public employees, professional, technical, administrative and of other grades," but a subsequent period under another Governor "demonstrated with equal clarity that such personnel structure is erected upon shifting sands which a change in State

administration can wipe out with even greater swiftness."<sup>2</sup> If security of tenure cannot be guaranteed for competent performance personnel in public service will be as fluctuating and ineffective as the sands of the desert.

Having looked at some of the present standards and problems of merit system administration of public welfare, what is the forecast of where the merit system is going? That depends on where its participants want it to go. If it is to go forward, it cannot be considered negatively. It is not just a system that, once established, can operate itself; it is not like an automatic piano that keeps going as long as one drops nickels in the slot. Personnel poorly selected under a so-called merit system can be more injurious to public service than political appointments given in return for "volunteer" service; at least *something* is known about the appointees under a patronage system. Less improvement in civil service is necessary when merit systems are planned for and operated with integrity and intelligence and sustained interest.

Leonard D. White forecasts that the next ten years of public service will be concerned with extension and coordination of Federal, State and City merit systems, with continued improvement in techniques, with emphasis on selective rather than mass recruiting. He advises that "safeguards against the subtle undermining of established merit systems are needed. Too often they deteriorate over the years until they are a mere façade of merit behind which the old feudal game of personal favors goes on. More ample funds are needed to permit the proper performance of the most elementary civil service duties, to say nothing of the refinements which are known to the profession and whose value has been tested in progressive jurisdictions." In spite of all the known difficulties inherent in public administration, Dr. White believes that "the level of public administration generally and of personnel management particularly is higher than at any time during the last half century."<sup>3</sup>

The administrative agencies in the field of public social work have interesting responsibilities in the future of merit systems. The administrative, or operating agencies, give color and tone to the merit systems. When they bring mature understanding to the difficulties which lie in any cooperative venture,

<sup>2</sup> Ellen C. Potter, Proceedings of National Conference of Social Work, Montreal, 1935, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard D. White, "Public Personnel Review," Vol. 1, p. 6.



they secure harmony and strength. The social workers' responsibility for recognizing and promoting human values inevitably brings them to the decision that individuals in need of assistance have the right to be administered to by the best qualified personnel. There is an increased number of individuals needing the assistance available through public funds. It is important that neither initial difficulties nor confusions nor possible tragic emergencies prevent the extension and use of the best method of serving those individuals—recruitment of competent social workers selected and retained under an accurately named merit system.

### *Proposed Amendment to the Social Security Act*

An important proposed amendment to the Social Security Act has been introduced by Senator Wagner, S. 4269, and Representative MacCormack, H.R. 10384. It plans

To extend the coverage of the Social Security Act to certain employed persons formerly excluded, to amend the Internal Revenue Code by changing the definition of employment for employment taxes, to provide for a variable basis for Federal grants to States for old-age assistance, and for other purposes.

**Public Assistance.** The bill amends section 2 (a) (7) of the Social Security Act as amended to provide that a State agency shall, in determining the income and resources of an individual claiming old-age assistance, take into consideration only such other income and resources as are actually available to the individual claiming old-age assistance and to the spouse of such individual.

Amends section 2 (a) of the Act as amended to provide that State plans shall not require an individual to transfer title of property to the State to be eligible for old-age assistance.

Amends section 3 (a) of the Act to provide for an increased ratio of Federal contributions for old-age assistance in States where the average per capita income is less than the average per capita income of the United States, with a limitation that the amount paid to any State for any quarter is not to be more than three-fourths of the total of the sums expended for old-age assistance in such State in such quarter. The Federal Government is to pay one-half of State administrative expenses.

**Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Benefits.** Amends title II of the Social Security Act as amended to include in its provisions agricultural labor; domestic service in a private home, local college club, or local chapter of a college fraternity or sorority; employees of United States Government not covered by the Civil Service Retirement Act as amended; service performed in the employ of a State or any political subdivision thereof; the nonprofit groups, except service performed by a duly ordained or duly commissioned or licensed minister of any church in the regular exercise of his ministry and service performed by regular members of religious orders in the exercise of duties required by such orders.

**Internal Revenue Code.** Amends the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (secs. 1400-1432 of the Code) and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (secs. 1600-1611 of the Code) to bring in the now excluded groups enumerated above. Amends the Federal Unemployment Tax Act to make it applicable to all employers rather than to employers of eight or more only.

The bill defines the terms "agricultural employment" and "farm."

*The Washington News Letter* of August 31 comments:

"Chances that the Wagner bill, S. 4269, will be reported this Congress are, of course, remote. The introduction of the bill August 14th, the fifth anniversary of the signing by the President of the original Act, was not, however, merely a gesture. Sometime ago, as recorded in the *News Letter*, the Senate appointed a committee to study the question of improving the Social Security program with instructions to go into every angle—including the Townsend scheme—thoroughly. The committee expects to begin hearings shortly after election and one of the measures before it will be S. 4269. The hearings promise to go over into the next Congress when, of course, it will be necessary for another authorizing resolution. However a certain amount of spade work will have been done. Members of the committee are Senators Walter George of Georgia, chairman; Tom Connolly of Texas, Harry Byrd of Virginia, Clyde Herring of Iowa, Edwin John of Colorado, Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin, Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan and John Townsend, Jr., of Delaware. Of these Connolly, Byrd, LaFollette, Vandenberg and Townsend are all up for reelection this fall. The first—Senator Connolly—has been renominated and, in Texas, that means practically elected but the others have to wait until November to know their fate.

"The bill, briefly, provides coverage for 10,000,000 additional wage earners or virtually all those now excluded from old-age and survivors insurance protection; it brings 5,000,000 more persons under the unemployment compensation program and increases old-age assistance payments to poorer States.

"Before coming out of committee the bill will be, of course, considerably changed. The clause on employees of non-profit organizations, for example. As it now reads the bill leaves excluded only 'duly ordained or duly commissioned or licensed minister of any church . . . members of religious orders.' Unquestionably the church groups will fight this point as they have done in the past and, as in the past, will win their point. Unless social service workers and other employees of non-profit organizations want to find themselves again excluded they should see to it that the compromise on this issue is not too drastic. It could take the nature of the present O'Day bill H.R. 8118 which excludes all employees of church and institutions of worship. But takes in just about a million others who want coverage and are entitled to it."

The National League of Women Voters has asked permission to reprint Ruth Wadman's article in the May COMPASS for their study kit on the subject of "Federal Responsibility for Public Health."



## Professional School Evaluation

(Continued from page 11)

"Before closing a discussion of this student's field work experience I feel that an adequate evaluation should include some comments about what the experience has meant to me as her supervisor. I have recognized that some of the student's uneasiness in her field work has had a definite relationship to my anxiety in success and failure qualities of my supervision. I seemed to have handled my own insecurity, particularly toward the last of the first semester, with a kind of stern defensiveness which must have been frightening to the student. I seemed to be in the process of thinking through how much responsibility I should take for this student's work and my first reaction to her blunders was in relation to myself. I wondered if I had failed in helping her to analyze her material. There was a period when I seemed unable to be direct with the student and I think she sensed that I was 'keeping back' ideas about her work. In the evaluation conference at the end of the first semester, I must have expressed some of this previously withheld material and I can now understand why the student felt that I had been 'destructive' in this evaluation conference. I believe that I grew along with her in the second semester and was able to understand and accept my supervisory position a little better in this period. In performance it has been hard for me to focus on the 'learning' aspect of field work. I have just begun to understand that I can let the student have freedom and still be quite direct in examining acceptable work which she may do."

Certain other complications in evaluation of field work are presented by the setting in which it is done. In a social agency a few supervisors from the staff make the valuations on the basis of more or less comparable material within the framework of the agency's setting. In field work, a large number of supervisors with a wide range of capacities for evaluating students, work in different agencies where availability and quality of material for teaching of students differs in each setting. The school of social work takes into account, in the final stage of accepting an evaluation of field work, the particular strengths of the supervisor as they are related to a student at this stage of his development. One supervisor writes of a beginning student, "she is naturally unskilled in handling marital difficulties but" and then describes how far the student is able to go in understanding marital problems. Another supervisor in a similar situation will indicate expectancy of

performance far beyond the realm of a beginning student. In certain agencies student's personal appearance and manner weigh very heavily in the final evaluation; in others supervisors seem more sensitive to case work development as such and omit altogether any emphasis upon contact with other social agencies and community resources. Variations among field work supervisors are no different from those within an agency staff. It is only that the school of social work has to balance and level off material from a larger group of supervisors in determining the evaluation of both students and the work they have had.

Not only is the availability of material a variable in field work and therefore in evaluation of performance, but the case work agencies themselves have different emphases and limitations within their setting. The school of social work is not critical of agencies' limitations and strengths for after all they represent the field as the future worker will have to meet it. Rather the advantage comes in being aware of some of the differences in the milieu in which case work is performed and recognizing what modifications and adaptations they require of students. In the public agency the student uses case work knowledge to make quick identification with a large number of clients and must recognize the legal limitations even with their most flexible interpretation of statutes and rulings. In a hospital the case worker has to take cognizance of her relation to the physician and work toward a position midway between a servile submissiveness to the doctor's authority and an aggressive independence that makes him unwilling to tolerate her. In terms of service to the patient this competition with the physician becomes most significant. In a private child placing agency the student's experience will be affected by the kinds of problems the agency accepts as well as the funds available for payment of board at the moment, while the public child placing agency with its case load committed through the court, with little possibility of selectivity and probability of long term planning, will present a very different group of cases. Here, too, foster homes where the low rate of board is fixed cut down the range of possible treatment situations. In any evaluation of field work the school must be cognizant not only of basic case work practice but constantly aware of the variations demanded by the milieu in which it is carried on in different case work field. The student will have to adapt himself to the differences in emphasis. In fact, one of the significant points in summarizing the content of a student's whole field



work experience is to see how well he has been able to make use of the particular opportunities for adaptation of case work practice in several agencies. This will serve as a basis for determining his first placement in a professional position in the light of his demonstrated capacity and the opportunities that will contribute most helpfully to his further development.

Exactly where does the field work department of the professional school stand in relation to the process of evaluation of field work, which is to say, where does it stand in relation to the content of field work itself? Difficult as triangular situations have been reputed to be this is an instance where with all the possibilities of complications they must inevitably be maintained. The school is, in the last analysis, the final authority in the evaluation of field work with a particular student, but before that point is reached the channels for communication and mutual help have long since been in effect. Together school and supervisors will have examined the work of a case work agency to see in what particular ways its load may contribute to the student's development as it is tied in with the content of his class room work. What unusually rich experience is available at the moment and where in the picture of case work performance is it probable that the student will have no opportunity to function? If intake is limited how can student's load be built up? As field work goes on supervisor, student and school are sharing their evaluation of the total experience ranging all the way from general problems as they grow out of particular case work situations, to case work progress as such and the ways in which student and supervisor are using the supervisory experience. Student supervisors accustomed to the total agency load and performance of regular workers have difficulty in translating their standards to the progress of the student and the limited time in the field. Sometimes in the final evaluation supervisor, student and school do not agree and the school will have to evaluate all the elements involved, including its own relation to both student and supervisor.

Students over a period of time learn how to use conferences with the field work department as an opportunity to evaluate both the setting of their field work, the scope and quality of their case load, and their own performance in relation to what is necessary to meet the problems. They also recognize the school as a place where they may examine quite objectively the supervisor-student relationship, although in most instances they are able to do this also with their field work supervisors.

Underlying the whole process of evaluation and the differences that exist between fields of case work, individual supervisors and individual students are the points at which we may come to grips with certain common problems of field work evaluation. In this the field work supervisors have an especially valuable contribution to offer the school. As they bring their experiences together to be examined along with the school's problems of professional education, we have, it seems to me, potentially sound ways for building for the future. In the matter of evaluation we need still to explore together constantly the changing content of case work practice, to examine more carefully what portions of it quantitatively and qualitatively the student may undertake during any particular period, and to learn how class content and field work may be more quickly and closely integrated.

### Training for Probation and Parole

*Federal Probation* for February 1940 carries an article on "Training for the Probation Profession" in which Frank T. Flynn discusses the current problems arising from the selection of probation and parole officers through discretionary appointments or civil service and points out that if the public is to be protected from incompetents and personnel standards are to be improved, it is essential that training be defined. In probation and parole the need for training is accepted in theory if not in practice but there is as yet no general agreement as to what this training should be. Many probation and parole officers consider probation and parole a distinctive field removed from social work and fail to recognize that it calls for use of the case work method. The inadequacy of learning on the job is clearly analyzed and in a description of professional education some excellent distinctions are drawn between supervised field work and "practice work." The author advocates an "internship" after completion of work at a professional school and suggests as a minimum standard for new workers in the field completion of undergraduate work in a recognized college or university, a year in an accredited school of social work and an internship of three months or more in an approved institution or agency under the supervision of a skilled practitioner in the field, on the basis of standards worked out by the school in cooperation with the agency.



## Social Work and Civil Service

(Continued from page 8)

strated conclusively that women made the best sea captains.

Certainly the field of testing and test techniques has developed enormously but it is still torn by conflicting theories and violent differences concerning method. It is a field of developing knowledge and skill that parallels social work. It is not necessary that social workers should master it. Rather is it important for them to understand the principles on which this special knowledge and skill are based and to be able to distinguish between methods and techniques, and the subject matter which they are used to test. The contribution of social work here lies in its capacity to extract from its analysis of social work practice material which can be used to test potential social workers. To say that this is impossible or too difficult is to deny the evidence of the field and to question the validity of education. If social work itself is teachable, then capacity for it is "testable."

Progress is made in two ways: (1) by the increasing articulation of the knowledge content of the field, and (2) the refinement of method for testing what has been articulated.

It would be futile in the brief scope of this paper to attempt to do more than enumerate some of the ways in which social work practice can be utilized in the development of selection. Primary among these is continuous analysis of jobs to be performed. This analysis leads logically to a formulation of desirable equipment. For this process the pronouncement of the American Association of Social Workers affords only the most general guide. There follows then a selection of the factors in that equipment which can be tested, and the discriminating choice of methods most suitable to test them. Work on the construction of test items and experimentation with these should be of great value in improving the test process.

Voluntary experiments with oral examinations, service on oral examination boards and analysis of the results of these experiences are essential. Research on the results of examinations and the relation between these results and subsequent service ratings is vital. The development of sound methods of rating service based on the job specification is one of the enterprises where social work can be of great assistance. Service on appeal boards is also valuable. Considerable work has been done on all of these items by professional organizations, their local chapters, and by individuals. Much more is needed, not only for the development of the service itself, but for

the enlargement of the horizon of social workers who participate.

It would be unfair to this topic to leave it without indicating some of the major problems about which social work is concerned. These are problems arising out of rapid progress, and they challenge the ingenuity of social workers and personnel technicians alike. One of these is the undue burden placed upon a merit system by low admission requirements. Where these are written into law they are difficult to remove. The statement of the AASW may be useful here. Social workers can and should insist that civil service is something more than a protection against spoils politics. The experience of one state in examining 70,000 persons for 7,000 jobs is a good illustration of the fact that such a system is expensive administratively, and however good the 7,000 selected candidates may have been, the process made approximately 63,000 unnecessary enemies for the system.

Another concern of social work is the tendency to select the "best of the group," rather than to fix standards below which none may fall and still qualify. The exigencies of large examinations plus the dearth of candidates meeting the conditions of local residence, etc., help to support this as a valid method. After all, these public jobs must be filled. But I suspect that a number of examinations with fixed passing grades resulting in no list might do much to break down arbitrary and irrelevant qualifications.

Finally, I think we must admit that we have not solved the problems of the career system or of tenure. Certainly social workers, like other advocates of civil service, believe firmly that a sound service can be built only by making available to all who enter the service opportunities for promotion within it. It is a misuse of this idea, I believe, to conceive of the system, certainly in this stage of its development so far as social work positions are concerned, as a closed system. It will be necessary for years to come, and at least until there are universal professional requirements for entrance to the lowest grade positions, to make the upper grade positions accessible to those who have professional qualifications of training and experience, whether or not this experience has been gained in the public field.

On the problem of tenure there is no easy solution. Certainly social workers, along with others, have fought to have written into private as well as public personnel practices guarantees of security and continuity of employment, without which good service is impossible. We cannot escape the fact, however,



that the tenure concept, never an end in itself, is sometimes in conflict with the development of the very standards it was designed to promote. In a field where new knowledge and skill are developing rapidly, this is likely to be a special problem, not met by an early retirement age. None of us would support, even in theory, a merit system which omitted the tenure feature. But we must develop methods better than those of the teaching field, with its requirement of continued study, for testing the continued fitness of social workers for public service. If we do not, we will find either the dismissal procedure becoming abused or the service itself suffering from entrenched ineffectiveness. This is a place where social work groups, schools, and operating and personnel agencies may collaborate helpfully.

The achievements of the last few years in the civil service selection for social work positions are only the beginning of a partnership between a professional field and the field of personnel administration that is rare and, our friends in personnel administration tell us, unusual in their experience. The development and enrichment of this partnership will depend to a substantial degree on the continuous painstaking effort of social workers in translating and objectifying the knowledge derived from practice for the uses of better personnel selection in public welfare.

### New York School Affiliates with Columbia

The affiliation of the New York School of Social Work with Columbia University has been announced. Beginning with the fall quarter, the School will cooperate directly with the Department of Social Science of the University and indirectly with all other departments. Instead of the diploma in social work, the degree of Master of Science will be awarded to graduates from the School. Dr. Walter M. Pettit will continue as director of the School and become a member of the Columbia University Council. The plan of operation provides for the exchange of students between the School and the University similar to that now existing between Teachers College and other educational units of Columbia. The School will retain its connection with the Community Service Society and will remain at 122 East Twenty-second Street.

**Which Are Sub-Professional Social Work Positions?** This question is not dealt with specifically in either Miss Cosgrove's or Miss Kahn's papers that are printed in this issue but when it was raised at Grand Rapids in the discussion following their presentation it was emphasized that no positions which involve direct contacts with clients in the public services can properly be described as sub-professional in their requirements and that it has been either the existing dearth of personnel or errors in classification arising out of public tions which have been responsible for classifying these positions in the sub-professional misunderstanding of the nature of these position.

HARALD H. LUND, who was on the staff of the AASW temporarily in the spring analyzing returns on the Trends questionnaire and handling publicity for the Delegate Conference, is now Assistant to Earl Harrison, Director of Alien Registration of the Department of Justice, and has responsibilities for coordinating the activities of social agencies in cooperation with Alien Registration.

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